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ABSTRACT

A practicum was implemented to provide low-achieving first-grade students with individualized instruction that would teach strategies to assist them in becoming independent readers. Secondary goals were: (1) to implement and develop a Chapter 1 Reading Improvement Plan targeted for low achieving first graders; (2) to improve reading self-esteem; (3) to enhance students' listening, writing, and speaking skills; (4) to develop reading strategies; (5) to increase the student's awareness of print; and (6) for teachers to demonstrate various reading strategies used to improve reading abilities. Twelve Chapter 1 first graders were the focus of the practicum. The program improvement plan was implemented over an 8-month period, divided into five phases. The individualized instructional procedures remained systematic with the Reading Recovery Program's daily lesson format. The reading selections and strategies were based on participants progressing during each session. Some results fell below numerical expectation, but the participants' ability to use appropriate reading strategies far exceeded overall expectations. The reader's self-esteem also improved when provided with an instructional format which met his or her needs. Overall success was achieved when the student could utilize strategies as needed while reading. (Nine tables of data are included and 26 references are attached. Appendixes include: the Word List Pre/Posttest; Writing Vocabulary Pre/Posttest; Instructional Strategy Survey; the Parent Survey; and descriptions of the district's Informal Reading Inventory, running record, Ready to Read Series, Letter Identification Pre/Posttest, Concepts about Pre/Posttest, and Dictation Test Pre/Posttest.) (Author/MG)

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# A Literacy Program Improvement Plan for Low-Achieving First Graders Using Reading Recovery Strategies

by

Debra G. Allen

Cluster XXIX

A Practicum II Report presented to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approved:

Apr. 14, 1991
Date of Final Approval of Report

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## ABSTRACT

A Literacy Program Improvement Plan for Low-Achieving First Graders Using Reading Recovery Strategies. Allen, Debra G., 1991: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Reading Evaluation Instruments/Remedial Reading Program/Elementary/Program Improvements Projects/Special Area Teachers/Reading/Literacy Projects/ Practitioners/Educational Research Innovation/Compensatory/Assessments and Screening Tests/Education/Reading.

The primary goal of this practicum was to provide low achieving first graders with individualized instructions to teach strategies which would assist them in becoming independent readers. The secondary goals were (a) to implement and develop a Chapter I Reading Improvement Plan targeted for low achieving first graders, (b) to improve reading self-esteem, (c) to enhance students' listening, writing and speaking skills, (d) to develop reading strategies, (e) to increase the student's awareness of print, and (f) for teachers to demonstrate various reading strategies used to improve reading abilities.

The writer administered several assessments prior to selecting the practicum participants to ensure that those selected were truly those whose needs were the greatest. The writer also provided training for individuals interested in the use of running records and various reading strategies.

Some results fell below numerical expectation, but the participants' ability to use appropriate reading strategies far exceeded overall expectations. The reader's self-esteem also improved when provided with an instructional format which met his needs. Overall success was achieved when the student could utilize strategies as needed while reading.

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## Description of Community

The setting for this practicum was a large Central Florida school district. It is the 23rd largest district out of more than 16,000 in the nation and is the 6th largest in the state. This school system owns more than 2,900 acres of property. There are 76 elementary schools with an estimated population of 54,200 students. Chapter I programs are presently housed in 55 elementary schools, and three additional schools by the 1990-91 school year. This $9 million project employed 130 reading teachers, 180 mathematics tutors, 20 district employees, and provided remedial services for 8,000 students during the 1989-90 school year. The practicum focused on one Chapter I reading program located in the western section of the district.

Chapter I, by nature of its design, supplements the students instructional program. This project is funded by the federal government to districts having a large percent of economically and educationally disadvantaged students. Each district's Chapter I program analyzes the results of the annual needs assessment thus determining the primary needs of the students to be served by that project.

The Chapter I program uses a child-centered approach to instruction and utilizes whole language strategies for the reading component because they capitalize upon each student's experiences and language abilities. All Chapter I reading teachers are responsible for instruction to 56 eligible reading students who have met the Chapter I criteria. Their (teachers) instruction must consist of a

holistic approach to reading and skills remediation. The math tutors remediate mathematical skills.

Additional duties of the school-level Chapter I reading teacher include assigning eligible students to mathematics tutors, assisting math tutors with scheduling for eligible students, checking plan sheets and coordination forms bimonthly, and observing the math tutors monthly in the classroom working with students.

The selected Chapter I school site has a population of 540 students: (a) 49 percent are on free and reduced lunches, (b) 59 percent from minority backgrounds, (c) 60 percent are bused as far as 12 miles to school, (d) 30 percent from middle and upper socio-economics classes, and (e) 25 percent from single family homes.

The purpose of this practicum was to assist low-achieving Chapter I students who were experiencing difficulty in reading. The students involved were first graders who were identified at the beginning of the year as needing remediation in the area of reading by their classroom teachers. They were selected for Chapter I services based on teacher observation and the Primary Educational Plan. The Primary Educational Plan identifies areas of concern and the suggested instructional strategy from which the student would best benefit. Each of the practicum students in the target group was identified as needing an alternative type of instruction and would be given first priority for attending summer school.

Twelve Chapter I first graders were the focus of this practicum. While the practicum was being implemented, their regular Chapter I teachers continued services to them in the area of reading.

The practicum writer provided a once-a-month follow-up conference with the Chapter I teachers to keep them informed of the student's progress, to match

instructional strategies, to assist them with their curriculum selections, and to identify possible techniques, concepts, and strategies which would benefit the practicum group.

## Writer's Work Setting and Role

The practicum writer is a Chapter I district-wide resource person responsible for overseeing the overall program components of reading and mathematics. Eleven elementary schools are under the directions of the writer and a program consultant. The job task includes classroom operations and observations; inservice training of the mathematics and reading personnel; and assisting the instructional needs of 28 reading teachers, 50 math tutors, and 11 reading support assistants.

# CHAPTER II

# STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

## Problem Description

The Chapter I program has received a mandate from the Florida Department of Education to implement a Program Improvement Plan for selected schools and students. A Program Improvement Plan is designed for the purpose of improving the educational performance of students at selected Chapter I schools. This mandate is required by Section 1020 of the Augustus F. Hawkins - Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988 (Public Law 100-297).

A Chapter I school is denoted as one in need of a Program Improvement Plan based on the annual review of the effectiveness of the Chapter I program. Each program improvement school is responsible for planning and implementing a school-wide project in consultation with the Chapter I district staff to incorporate those program changes that have the greatest likelihood of improving the instructional performance of selected students. These students do not succeed in the regular program, attain grade-level proficiency, show achievement in basic skills, and fail to demonstrate performance gains comparable to other students. The program changes must include an alternative curriculum that has shown promise in similar schools.

The practicum site chosen was identified as failing to show satisfactory progress of the majority (50% + 1 student) of its Chapter I population using the standardized norm-referenced test selected by the district. Satisfactory progress is

defined as failure to advance one percentile rank in one year in reading as measured by the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS), Form U.

The Chapter I program embraces the whole language approach for the reading component through a limited pullout teacher model. In a whole language curriculum, the child is involved in language activities that include decision-making, problem-solving, using language for real purposes, and learning how to work with others. The Chapter I teachers build on the child's previous knowledge and the use of his spoken and written language.

Chapter I relies heavily on information received during conferences with the classroom teacher for planning instructions. There was a lack of coordination/communication between the Chapter I teachers and the Classroom teachers which inhibited the securing of specific skills for each individual child based on needs.

Most Chapter I students are from low-income homes which did not place a value on early language experiences. These children are somewhat unlucky because their early years were not rich in language of varying types. Many of them are not articulate due to the failure of their parents to play with, sing to, read to, and talk with and listen to them with patience. The children do not have control over oral language prior to starting school. For many, their language growth is just beginning.

The school must provide caring teachers who will share experiences, opportunities for the development of self-esteem, reading models to imitate, a rich environment surrounding print, opportunities for students to progress through stages of development, and assurance that their weaknesses will be accepted. Teachers should demonstrate their expectations for their students success.

To offset the probabilities of these students being involved in the school's program improvement plan next year, efforts are now beginning to address low-

achieving first graders. This practicum addressed low-achieving first graders who were not provided appropriate and adequate support to enable them to become independent readers.

This program improvement plan did not take the place of the reading instructions received by the classroom nor the Chapter I reading teachers. Instead, it was used to improve the coordination/communication between the classroom and Chapter I teachers, to assist the Chapter I teachers in providing support for each individual student based on his stage of development, and to further improve how achieving first graders' abilities to use a variety of reading cues to further their progress toward becoming independent readers.

The important contrast between the improvement plan and the regular Chapter I program is that the improvement plan model is heavily child-initiated based on his needs and strengths, while the other model is more teacher-directed. The child-initiated model would allow the teacher to spend more time instructing an individual child.

When the problem was solved, the Chapter I teachers provided individualized instructions to help each child develop the strategies, understandings, and attitudes necessary to develop good reading behaviors. The teacher assisted each student in learning the techniques of confirming and self-correcting in reading. As the student progressed, he gained the necessary skills and confidence needed to begin taking a risk. This enabled him to accept responsibility for his learning. In brief, the problem was that low-achieving first graders were not provided appropriate and adequate support to enable them to become independent readers.

## Problem Documentation

To substantiate the appropriateness of this "practicum problem," the following documentation was provided:

1. First grade students were selected for Chapter I services based on their instructional placement by the classroom teacher on the Primary Educational Plan (an assessment of a student's academic weaknesses in the areas of reading and math as identified by the classroom teacher along with her plans for remediation through the use of preventative types of strategies).

2. Fifty Chapter I first graders were given the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) (see Appendix A) based on their Primary Educational Plan which recommended them for alternative instructional strategies and possible summer school enrollment.

3. The District's IRI (see Appendix A) selected by the district for basal placement was administered individually to the same 50 Chapter I first graders at the end of the first semester, January 22, 1990; the following results were yielded:

Table 1

Chapter I First Graders IRI Placement

| # of Students at Readiness Level A | # of Students at Pre-Primer Level B |
|---|---|
| 16 | 34 |

The 16 students placing at or below Level A (see Table 1) on the IRI (see Appendix A) were further screened using three reading passages of increasing

levels of difficulty which contained no more than 100 high frequency words extending to the first grade level.

4. A running record (see Appendix B) allowed for the tracking of each student's reading behavior while attempting the word passages to determine the strengths and weaknesses of grade-level reading.

5. Running records (see Appendix B) were completed for the 16 first graders (see Table 1) at the end of the third 9 weeks, March 25, 1990; the following results were yielded:

Table 2

Summary of Running Records

| % Words Correct | Number of Students |
|---|---|
| 0 - 25 | 4 |
| 26 - 50 | 8 |
| 51 - 75 | 0 |
| 76 - 100 | 4 |

Note: The reading passages contained no more than 100 high frequency words ranging from pre-primer to first grade level.

6. The 12 students who were not able to read more than 50 percent of the text at the pre-primer level using the running record (see Table 2) became the practicum participants.

7. None of the 12 students in the target group had made measurable progress over the last year within the emergent level of the Ready to Read Series (1985).

8. None of the 12 students in the target group could pronounce all of the words in the high-frequency word list (see Appendix D) and the mean number that all children in this group were able to pronounce was only five.

9. None of the 12 students in the target group was able to identify all of the letters on the Letter Identification Pretest (see Appendix E) and the mean number that all children in the group were able to identify was 15.

10. None of the 12 students in the target group were able to identify all items on using the Concepts About Print Pretest (see Appendix F) and the mean number that all children in the group were able to identify was 2.

11. None of the 12 students in the target group were able to write his own name much less a list of correctly spelled words in ten minutes using the Writing Vocabulary Pretest (see Appendix G).

12. None of the 12 students in the target group were able to record any of the word sounds in the dictated sentences using the Dictation Pretest (see Appendix H).

## Causative Analysis

In reviewing the results of the Chapter I First Graders IRI Placement (see Table 1) and the Summary of Running Records (see Table 2), the Instructional Strategy Survey (see Appendix I), and the Parent Survey (see Appendix J), it was evident that the need for appropriate and adequate support for first grade readers to function independently existed based on the following deficiencies:

1. A lack of concepts relating to print
2. Few opportunities provided for students to use oral interaction to support literacy learning
3. Frequent absenteeism
4. Limited educational experiences

5. A lack of a variety of instructional strategies
6. A lack of parental support for reading at home.

The 12 practicum participants showed a lack of ability to handle printed text appropriately in comparison to other first graders served by the project. In addition, the school's attendance records indicated that these students had a 20% higher rate of absenteeism than other first graders in the school. Due to this higher rate of absenteeism, these students had less opportunity to interact with the Chapter I teacher and the regular classroom teacher; therefore, these students' educational experiences were limited causing them to have fewer opportunities for oral interaction to support their literacy learning.

The Instructional Strategy Survey (see Appendix I) results (see Table 3) indicated that the only reading strategies used to a high degree by the four teachers involved with the practicum participants were oral and shared reading. Other strategies which the writer felt to be important in teaching reading to low-achieving readers, such as language awareness, predicting strategies, thinking aloud strategies, directional movement sequencing, locating responses, cloze, graphic organizers, cross-checking, one-to-one word matching, sound-symbol relationships and confirm/correct were used only infrequently, if at all. Thus, the writer concluded that the practicum participants had not been given the type of instructional support needed in order to become independent readers.

Table 3

Mean Weekly Use of Instructional Strategies

| Strategy # | Mean # |
|---|---|
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 1 |
| 5 | 1 |
| 6 | 1 |
| 7 | 1 |
| 8 | 1 |
| 9 | 1 |
| 10 | 1 |
| 11 | 1 |
| 12 | 1 |
| 13 | 2 |
| 14 | 1 |
| 15 | 1 |
| 16 | 5 |
| 17 | 5 |
| 18 | 0 |
| 19 | 1 |
| 20 | 0 |

Note: The survey was completed by four reading teachers.

The following Parent Survey (see Appendix J) summary reflected the responses from parents of the 12 practicum participants. The responses indicated that none of the practicum participants' parents spent more than two hours a week helping them with their school work. Only two of the respondents read with or to the participants at home, but none spent more than three days a week so doing.

The survey results also indicated that only two of the practicum participants selected books to read on their own, and only one respondent felt that his child had a positive attitude toward reading. Nine respondents never visited their child's school during the past year, ten never conferenced with their child's teacher, and all respondents felt that their child would benefit from an additional support program to strengthen his reading ability.

## Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Educators are beginning to address the issues of how children learn best. This concern has attracted educators, parents, community, and governmental agencies to investigate programs which lend themselves to addressing the issue. This paper provided a brief review of the literature focusing on literacy, strategies, techniques, and innovative programs designed to improve reading.

Numerous approaches and variations of approaches have been used in teaching reading. These approaches were designed and initiated for the purpose of producing successful readers.

Theorists, such as Frank Smith and Ken Goodman, assisted us in viewing reading and its processes from new insights. Their contributions, along with those whose main interest was to observe children while reading, has provided a new outlook into this field.

Researchers (Goodman, 1987; Clay, 1985) are beginning to address how children can best be helped to become independent readers. The current trend of this research suggested that reading should be taught using the "holistic" approach. In other words, it is a whole process which focuses on meaning while involving opportunities to predict and verify the text using cueing systems (Goodman, 1987).

Psycholinguistics theorists view reading instruction as a process whereby the child's experiences were used to actively involve him in understanding what he reads. Opponents of this theory caution educators not to view it as the solution to teaching reading but as another alternative.

The language experience approach allows children to become actively involved in the reading process. They learn sound-symbol relationships through reading. This approach is more meaningful in helping children to become readers. Researchers (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985) suggest that methods which employ word identification strategies along with meaningful experiences are more successful.

An appropriate program for low achieving first graders is one which places the emphasis on the strengths of each child rather than the program, thus providing adequate training to assist the child in developing those skills that best benefit him in his quest to become an independent reader. This type of program allows the child's needs to be met through the flexibility and the variety that could be offered to meet the range of developmental, socio-economic and cultural needs (Leeper, Witherspoon & Day, 1984).

The home environment plays a major role in a child's success as a learner. During the early years, parents expose their children to the world of reading by reading to them. Children tend to model those behaviors that they see. Children whose parents read to them at home will most likely become successful readers. Several studies (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale & Sulzby, 1985) indicated that a child's ability to read can be directly associated with the amount of exposure he has had to books filled with vocabulary and story structure. On the other hand, children from economically disadvantaged homes are provided fewer opportunities to read prior to entering school and therefore, many are labeled as "at risk" in relation to literacy acquisition (Roser, Hoffman & Forest, 1990).

Children's failure in school can be attributed to our mobile society, family problems, economics, parents' lack of education, homelessness, joblessness, learning and behavior problems, few opportunities to read or to be read to, lack of exposure to reading models, and minimal opportunities to develop language and literacy skills that are meaningful. Taylor and Strickland (1986) suggested that parents who provide reading opportunities for their children have assured them an educational advantage over those who do not.

A parent's educational level can be used to predict the literacy level of his children. Therefore, parents who lack basic skills themselves most often have children who are also educationally disadvantaged (Jongsma, 1990).

One benefit of home reading can be attributed to the child's development of a "literacy set" (Holdway, 1980), which includes the awareness of book handling (e.g., top to bottom, front to back). True or not educators must review the type of reading used in school and should pattern it closer to what occurs in the home. Emergent literacy begins when a child's experiences provide him with the foundation necessary to read and write instead of isolated practices of motor, visual, and auditory discrimination skills (Schickendanz, 1986).

Past research (Evans and Carr, 1985; Fox, 1987) identified two distinct instructional approaches relating to the concept of print. The mastery of the sequencing of skills and whole language are the two most important approaches now being implemented in the reading arena.

As a philosophy and an attitude, whole language can be an effective technique which uses the integrated language approach. This approach allows each child to become actively involved in the learning process. To create a well-rounded curriculum, whole language includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

We, as educators, can view the research on whole language as a new insight toward understanding the problem of low achievement in reading among students. A certain percentage of poor readers and the steady increase of illiterate young people can be eradicated

Marie Clay, professor of education at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, developed the Whole Language Reading Recovery program as a way to address the needs of children with reading problems when detected at an early age. Research serves as the foundation for this program. The program has been tested and evaluated in numerous places including the United States. Clay (1985) developed a research study to determine the impact of early intervention techniques used for the purpose of reducing reading failure.

Clay's (1985) Auckland-based study of 100 children concluded that some of the children made slow progress due to their poor language development, but the actual problem related to the inability to form and repeat sentences and phrases. Poor motor coordination, rebelliousness and lack of self-esteem contributed to their poor performance in reading.

The "Open Sesame" (Larrick, 1987) whole language program is presently being used in the city of New York. It was organized and developed by the American Reading Council. The purpose of the program was to emphasize the placement of Kindergartners who spoke little or no English at the beginning of the school year. This program operates under the philosophies of Jean Piaget, Frank Smith, and Sylvia Ashton-Warner. The location of the program is in an area which is heavily populated with immigrants, both legal and illegal. Ninety-two percent of the program participants were from Spanish-speaking homes; 96 percent lived in poverty; 80 percent of the students spoke no English in 1985. Larrick (1987) reported that at the end of the first year all 255 kindergartners were able to read and dictate stories. Furthermore, these students were able to read in English.

Pinnell (1987) suggested that staff development programs should prepare teachers as knowledgeable and flexible decision makers who can adjust their instruction to students' learning processes. Teachers should be trained to read and discuss appropriate instructional strategies; however, they must also learn to see what occurs and to adjust instructions according to each child's needs, thus facilitating his learning. Whole language can also promote professional camaraderie among teachers as they learn to exchange ideas and solve problems.

This review attempted to acquaint the readers with current trends now being implemented throughout the world. It is hoped that the review will prove to be beneficial to educators who are attempting to create a foundation for improved reading achievements among low-achieving students.

In closing, the growing body of research and theory on reading can serve as an excellent guide to curricular and instructional changes. Teachers who are interested in improving the quality of their reading programs should consider some of the preferred practices suggested in the literature review.

# CHAPTER III

# ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

## Statement of General Goals

The general goal of this practicum was to provide Chapter I first grade students with instructional opportunities to become successful readers through the use of developmentally appropriate learning experiences (Bredecamp, 1987; NAEYC, 1982).

The following goals were projected for this practicum and included: (a) the implementation and the development of a Chapter I Reading Improvement Plan targeted for low achieving first graders, (b) to acquaint these students with the concepts of print, (c) to improve reading self-esteem, (d) to enhance students' listening, writing and speaking skills and (e) to provide Chapter I and classroom teachers with an understanding of the behaviors and attitudes that are characteristic of readers at different stages of development.

## Behavioral Expectations

The following specific objectives were projected for this practicum:

Objective One: Upon completion of the training, the 12 participants will be able to advance within each book level of the Ready to Read series (see Appendix C).

Objective Two: When provided with: a standard set of pre-primer words, 9 of the 12 participants will be able to pronounce the Word List Pre/Posttest (see Appendix D) with 15 out of 15 correct responses.

Objective Three: Upon completion of the instructional strategy sessions, the 12 participants will be able to demonstrate progress with 100% accuracy on the Letter Identification Pre/Posttest (see Appendix E).

Objective Four: Given the Concepts About Print Pre/Posttest (see Appendix F), 9 of the 12 participants will increase one stanine score.

Objective Five: When provided with a Writing Vocabulary Pre/Posttest (see Appendix G), 9 of the 12 participants will be able to increase their total score by correctly spelling four additional words in 10 minutes.

Objective Six: Each participant will demonstrate his ability to analyze words and record sounds of letters using the Dictation Pre/Posttest (see Appendix H) and must have three or more new words to achieve an acceptable passing performance level.

Objective Seven: Upon completion of the training, the participating Chapter I teachers will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the stages of reading development by planning for the use of appropriate materials, instructional strategies, student activities, and diagnostic instruments to aid in individualized reading instructions.

## Evaluative Instruments

The instruments used to evaluate the practicum goals and objectives were as follows:

1. The levels of the Ready to Read series (see Appendix C) will be used to demonstrate a participant's progression within each book level during the training program.

2. The Word List Posttest (see Appendix D) will be administered at the final session to determine the participant's ability to correctly pronounce the standard set of 15 basal words.

3. The Letter Identification Posttest (see Appendix E) will be used to determine a participant's ability to correctly distinguish the letters of the alphabets upon the completion of the sessions.

4. The Concepts About Print Posttest (see Appendix F) will be used upon the completion of the training sessions to demonstrate the participant's progress of one stanine score.

5. The Writing Vocabulary Posttest will be used to demonstrate the participant's ability to increase their total score of correctly spelled words by four additional words in 10 minutes. The practicum writer will administer this test during phase one and after the final instructional session.

6. The Dictation Posttest (see Appendix H) must have three or more new words to achieve an acceptable passing performance level. The practicum writer will administer this test during phase one and after the final instructional session.

7. The Instructional Strategy Survey (see Appendix I) will be used to show an increase in the use of appropriate instructional strategies for low-achieving readers by the Chapter I teachers. A comparison of the mean scores before and after will be used to measure this objective. The practicum writer will administer this survey during phase five.

# CHAPTER IV

# SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Discussion and Evaluation Solution

The problem is that low-achieving first graders are not provided appropriate and adequate support to enable them to become independent readers. This problem exists because we, as educators, are still trying to find the magic formula that would prevent reading failures among young children. As an age old problem many have attempted to solve it through teacher training programs, discussion groups, diagnostic assessments, refined procedures and techniques for reading instead of allowing teachers to make instructional decisions. As Clay (1985) stated, "A large number of techniques were piloted, observed, discussed, argued over, related to theory, analyzed, written up, modified and tried out in various ways, and, most important, many were discarded" (p. 84). She further stated, "No one technique is satisfactory on its own. Teachers are advised to apply as many as possible to the children for whom important instructional decisions must be made" (Clay, 1985, p. 16).

We must not rely on no one philosophy, theory or educational practice. Instead we should study the relationship developed among each of them. In selecting a solution for this problem, we must investigate various programs which can yield results according to Pinnell, Fried and Estice (1990) that are consistent across ethnic, economic, and language groups.

Roser, Hoffman and Forest (1990) implemented an innovative program entitled, "Language to Literacy," (LTL). The program was designed to meet the educational needs of at-risk children in six elementary schools in Texas. The sites

were selected based on the low test results yield from the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). The participants were primarily from limited-English proficient homes which were located in economically-disadvantaged communities.

The analysis (see Roser, et al. 1990, for complete data) of the LTL program revealed an increase in percentile scores across the areas of reading and language arts. The second grade participants were compared with non-participants. These results relating to the LTL program indicated "that a literature-based program can be implemented successfully in schools that serve at-risk students" (Roser, et al. 1990, p. 559). Due to the implementation period of the practicum, this particular program would be inappropriate because the amount of time, personnel, and the resources needed would prohibit a successful employment of the project's goals.

Pogrow (1990) developed the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) project as an innovative program designed to improve the long-term learning opportunities for Chapter I students. The activities included practice using the cognitive theory to improve thinking abilities. Computers were also used to provide an additional challenge.

The HOTS program was developed for students in grades four through seven to replace the drill and practice usually associated with remedial programs. The HOTS program is recommended for older children based on its design and long-term goals. The idea is to increase the thinking capacity of students to enable them to solve everyday problems. This type of program would not address the practicum problem of low-achieving first graders' inability to be independent readers. The three to four year commitment would far exceed the amount of time for the practicum implementation process.

Reading Recovery has proven to be a worthwhile early intervention program for "at risk" children who are experiencing reading failure. The goal of the

program is to improve reading skills of dependent readers. The procedures assure a second chance for participants to because independent readers.

Ohio adopted a statewide Reading Recovery Project during the 1984-85 pilot year. The results indicated, "All reading recovery children made progress on the six measures of the Diagnostic Survey . . . Seven to four percent of the children were able to be 'recovered', allowing them to function at the average level of the class"(cited in Williams, 1987, p. 3). The results are an indication of the success of intervention programs.

Clay (1985) refers to the six measures of the Diagnostic Survey as ". . . criterion-referenced assessment" (p. 16). The advantages of these measures allow teachers to observe students and to make notes of their strengths, weaknesses and frustrations. The six measures implemented by Clay (1985) in the Reading Recovery Program are as follows:

1. Letter Identification
2. Concepts About Print
3. Word Tests
4. Writing Vocabulary
5. Dictation
6. Running Record

Lauritzen (1989) stated, ". . . that children acquire awareness of print and its functions throughout the preschool and early school year . . . children introduced to reading through predictable texts are able to learn to read by reading and to make connections through discovering patterns in writing" (p. 9). Mooney (1988) stated, "A child-centered program is more concerned with how children learn, and with helping children to learn how to learn, than with instructing"(p. 2). Clay (1985) stated that "Most children will learn to read in . . . programs which take individual needs and personal learning schedules into account . . . it is possible to develop a strategy for reducing the numbers of children with reading difficulties" (p. 68).

Pinnell (1987) suggested that staff development programs should prepare teachers as knowledgeable and flexible decision makers who can adjust their instruction to students' learning processes.

Teachers should be trained to read and discuss appropriate instructional strategies; however, they must also learn to observe and to adjust instructions according to each child's needs, thus facilitating his learning. Fuhler (1990) stated, ". . . teachers do need to become professional kid-watchers and have the latitude to pick and choose . . . materials, fitting them to the child's needs" (p. 313).

Reading Recovery techniques include a variety of selected books to be used during the one-to-one lessons. These selections are based on the concepts of building self-confidence, writing experiences, and opportunities for repeated readings, listening and recognizing sounds. It also allows students to use both reading and writing. Clay (1985) stated, "A flexible program which respects individuality at first, gradually brings children to the point where group instruction can be provided for those with common learning needs" (p. 12).

Two assumptions outline the format of the Reading Recovery program. Clay (1985) suggests that ". . . a program for a child having difficulty learning to read should be based on a detailed observation of that child as a reader and writer, . . . [and] what that child can do" (p. 52). This effort would allow the teacher to focus on the weaknesses. She further stated, ". . . we need to know how children who become readers learn to read so that children who are having difficulty can be helped along the same path" (Clay, 1985, p. 52).

Brown, Campione, and Day (1981) suggested that ". . . effective learning involves four main considerations: (1) the activities engaged in by the learner, (2) certain characteristics of the learner including his/her capacity and state of prior knowledge, (3) the nature of the material to be learned, and (4) the critical task . . ." (pp. 14-15).

The writer is optimistic about the future of literacy in America. Literacy has improved and will continue to improve as research unfolds new knowledge relating to the primary processes involved in reading, learning, and teaching. Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilderson (1985) summarized their optimism as follows:

> The knowledge is now available to make worthwhile improvements in reading throughout the United States. If the practices seen in the classrooms of the best teachers in the best schools could be introduced everywhere, improvements in reading would be dramatic. (p. 3)

The growing body of research and theory focusing on reading can serve as an excellent guide for curriculum and instructional changes. Teachers who are interested in improving the quality of their reading programs should consider some of the preferred practices suggested in the literature review.

The literature suggested that when teachers have the motivation, techniques, skills, training, and confidence to personalize learning activities, they (the teachers) begin to foster progress toward enhancing the learning opportunities. This enhancement is beneficial to the teachers and the students.

In making a difference, creative teachers and lifelong learners are willing to do a little experimenting, and/or risk taking. Newman (1984) stated, "Learning to use what you have at your disposal, . . . is an important part of learning . . ." (p. 14).

Individualized programs do not focus instruction based on the publisher's suggestions and format. Instead they focus on the needs of each learner. One such program is the Reading Recovery program. Clay (1985) stated, ". . . the individual child's capacities determine the program" (p. 56).

Clay (1985) suggested the following format for daily lesson:

1. Rereading of two or more familiar books.
2. Rereading yesterday's new book and taking a running record.
3. Letter identification (plastic letters on a magnetic board).

4. Writing a story (including hearing sounds in words.
5. Cut-up story to be rearranged.
6. New book introduced.
7. New book attempted. (p. 56)

These seven steps were considered by the writer when designing the instructional lesson format for individualized instructions for the practicum participants.

The research revealed a widespread need for programs which provide alternative instructional settings to address the literacy problem among young, economically-disadvantaged students. There were indeed many programs in operation which addressed this need, and most have been successful to some degree.

Although there were many programs at the writer's disposal which could have been implemented to address the practicum problem, the writer found that most required a longer implementation period than was practical for the practicum and most required more resources than were immediately available.

Therefore, the writer chose to use Clay's (1985) six-part diagnostic measures (described earlier) that provided the framework through which the practicum writer designed the literacy-based program improvement plan for low-achieving first graders using Reading Recovery Strategies. The essential characteristics of this innovative research-based program provided the insights for this program improvement plan.

This model provided low-achieving first graders with instructional opportunities to enable them to become successful readers through the use of developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Upon the completion of this program improvement plan, participants would be able to progress toward functioning independently as readers.

## Description of Selected Solution

The selected solution was based upon (a) review of the literature; (b) consultations with the Chapter I district staff, principal, reading teachers, and the classroom teachers; and (c) an extensive analysis of the existing problem situation. The solution strategy was comprehensive and employed a systematic approach which was supported in the literature and was described as having an increased probability of being a successful intervention plan. The intervention plan consisted of (a) formal and informal conferences to discuss areas of concerns relating to each participant, (b) 25 weeks of individualized instructions ranging from 35 to 40 minutes each, and (c) diagnostic testing twice during the implementation of the practicum.

The program improvement plan for low-achieving first graders was implemented over an eight-month period. The plan was divided into five phases as follows:

Phase One consisted of (a) observing the participants during their reading time blocks, (b) conferencing with the classroom and Chapter I teachers to establish background information relating to instructional needs, (c) reviewing the instructional materials for readability, (d) reading the story selections found in the Right To Read series (1985) by the Department of Education, New Zealand and published by Richard C. Owen and Story Box by the Wright Group, and (e) administering the Pretests (see Appendices D, E, F, G, and H). Phase Two was devoted to (a) getting to know each participant, and (b) organizing the first five weeks of initial instructions focusing on the students strengths based on the information obtained from the Pretest results.

Phase Three focused on individualized instructions for participants based on their needs. The instructional procedures remained systematic with Clay's (1985)

daily lesson plan format. The reading selections and strategies were based on participants progressing during each session.

Phase Four consisted of (a) administering the Posttests (see Appendices D, E, F, G, and H), (b) analyzing the results (see Tables 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) and (c) conferencing with parents, classroom and Chapter I teachers to discuss results. Phase Five focused on (a) individual participants who were in need of continuous instructions, (b) providing teachers and parents with helpful instructional needs, suggestions and strategies to continue the enhancement of each participant and (c) planning, selecting, and identifying appropriate supplemental reading texts for participants.

The instructional sessions were changed to an afterschool activity due to scheduling conflicts and the additional amount of time the participants were being pulled out of their classrooms. The practicum writer made the changes because of the district's Chapter I program which provided instructional assistance to these students four days a week for 40 minutes daily. The design of the practicum was not to replace the services but to provide additional services about and beyond.

The changes affected the practicum very positively because it developed a set of responses which the writer had not considered. One major effect was the offer made by a local pediatrician to use her office space on Saturdays to tutor students who are from a low-income area and are apart of her clientele. This caused the practicum writer to explore other ideas and strategies to get other community individuals and leaders involved. Thus far the practicum writer has established a faithful following. Every other Saturday morning, a local bookstore located in the heart of the community will provide a storytime hour which is closely related to the concerns which the writer shared with the owner concerning the needs of these students to be read to. After the present practicum group has completed their weeks of services (based on individual needs), the writer plans to

start another group in the same community for students who along with their parents would attend weekly sessions for providing extra instructional help. The writer's church has just begun a tutoring session that the writer will also become apart of on Wednesday afternoons.

An unexpected spin-off resulted in the Chapter I program requiring all of its teachers to observe and document students' progress within each of their instructional groups. An additional spin off was that the assessments which the writer used as pretest instruments are now being used by other Chapter I teachers to identify the strengths of first grade students in the areas of letter identification and print concepts. A word list associated with the vocabulary of the Story Box series was used instead of the one selected by the writer. However, due to the large number of students for which each teacher is responsible, the task was not well received. Perhaps, it was a problem because many viewed it as an enormous task that was not necessary.

The practicum writer was able to share the experiences of this practicum -- its fears, strengths, frustrations, and weaknesses. Sharing the literature which supported this direction was well received and provided the writer with a feeling of expertise and an extensive awareness of various remedial models as the project began to make changes for the coming year.

# CHAPTER V

## RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Results

The results obtained reflect the projected outcomes of the seven objectives of this practicum discussed in Chapter III. Objective One results were measured based on individual progression through texts within the levels of the Ready to Read series (see Appendix C). The text selections varied in difficulty to aid in the identification of the appropriate reading level. Running records (see Appendix B) were taken on each selection to provide the writer with observable behaviors used by the reader when reading. These observations determined progress and aided the writer in designing future sessions.

Table 4

Reading Placement at Three Intervals

| Stage/Level | No. of Students Achieving Level | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Initial | Mid-Point | Final |
| 1 A | 12 | 3 | 1 |
| 1 B | 0 | 9 | 3 |
| 1 C | 0 | 0 | 8 |

Note: No. = number

Table 4 shows the progress made by the participants during three intervals as book-level progression was assessed within Stage One. Objective One was successfully achieved upon the completion of the instructional training.

The second objective results were measured based on the participants ability to correctly pronounce 15 out of 15 basal words listed on the Word List Posttest (see Appendix B). To determine the effectiveness of the objective, the posttest was administered using the pretest words during the final instructional session.

Table 5

Results of Word List Pre/Posttest

| | Frequency | |
|---|---|---|
| Score | Pretest | Posttest |
| 15 | 0 | 9 |
| 14 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | 0 | 1 |
| 12 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | 0 | 1 |
| 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Below 10 | 12 | 1 |

Table 5 illustrates the comparison of pre and posttest scores and the frequency at which a given score was achieved. The results indicate that nine out of twelve participants successfully achieved the objective.

Objective Three results were measured based on the participants ability to correctly distinquish the letters of the alphabets given on the Letter Identification Posttest (see Appendix E) with 100% accuracy. Table 6 shows that the participants met the objective overwhelmingly.

Table 6

Letter Identification Pre/Posttest Results

| | Scores | |
|---|---|---|
| Participant | Pretest | Posttest |
| A | 30 | 54 |
| B | 25 | 54 |
| C | 36 | 54 |
| D | 29 | 54 |
| E | 40 | 54 |
| F | 18 | 54 |
| G | 33 | 54 |
| H | 26 | 54 |
| I | 20 | 54 |
| J | 16 | 54 |
| K | 31 | 54 |
| L | 32 | 54 |

Note: Maximum Score = 54.

Objective Four was measured using the mean scores of the Concept About Print Pre/Posttest (see Appendix F) results. The test was administered during the initial session and the last instructional session.

Table 7

Concepts About Print Mean Scores

| | Mean Score | |
|---|---|---|
| No. of Participants | Pretest | Posttest |
| 12 | 2.75 | 9 |

Note: Maximum Score = 24. No. = number.

Table 7 yielded a passing performance for all of the practicum participants. The participants demonstrated improved performance throughout the instructional sessions. Numerous strategies were demonstrated by the writer to aid participants in their quest to improve their reading abilities. The strategies were based on the needs of each participant as he progressed throughout the various reading selections.

The fifth objective was measured using the Writing Vocabulary Pre/Posttest (see Appendix G). Ten of the twelve participants were able to correctly spell four additional words in ten minutes. The increase was determined by comparing the difference between the total scores as illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8

Score Differences on the Writing Vocabulary Pre/Posttest Results

| Participant | Pretest | Posttest | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 2 | 7 | +5 |
| B | 3 | 11 | +8 |
| C | 1 | 6 | +5 |
| D | 3 | 10 | +7 |
| E | 3 | 15 | +9 |
| F | 1 | 3 | +2 |
| G | 0 | 2 | +2 |
| H | 2 | 8 | +6 |
| I | 1 | 6 | +5 |
| J | 0 | 4 | +4 |
| K | 3 | 8 | +5 |
| L | 2 | 9 | +7 |

Objective Five results far exceeded the practicum writer's expectations. A survey of the additional words used showed an increased use of rhyming words, their names, names of friends and family members, and the use of pronouns (e.g. I, me). An additional notation of achievement would be the development of positive attitudes coupled with the participant's desire to write.

Objective Six was measured using score differences of the Dictation Pre/Posttest (see Appendix H). All of the 12 participants were administered the test during Phase One and again during the final instructional session.

Table 9

Score Differences on the Dictation Pre/Posttest Results

| Participant | Pretest | Posttest | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 4 | 16 | +10 |
| B | 4 | 10 | +7 |
| C | 2 | 6 | +4 |
| D | 2 | 8 | +5 |
| E | 6 | 20 | +13 |
| F | 0 | 2 | +2 |
| G | 0 | 2 | +2 |
| H | 1 | 5 | +3 |
| I | 3 | 9 | +6 |
| J | 0 | 4 | +2 |
| K | 1 | 7 | +4 |
| L | 4 | 8 | +6 |

Note: Maximum Score = 37.

Table 9 illustrates that nine out of the twelve participants successfully achieved a passing performance level as indicated by the positive differences between the scores. The participants demonstrated their ability to analyze and record sounds heard during the reading of the selection by the practicum writer.

The participants had demonstrated in their writing the use of capital letters and punctuation marks when responding to the practicum writer's notes. These notes were written to each participant prior to each session to spark their interest in what was to happen, and to discuss funny things that had happened since our last session. It also served as a strategy to get the participants to read and respond in a written format. Near the end of the sessions participants had begun to write more.

The Parent Survey (see Appendix J) summarized responses from parents of the practicum participants. The responses yielded indicate that six of the parents spent more than two hours a week helping their children with their school work after beginning this special project. Eight of the respondents indicated that their children are now enjoying shared reading at home. Six of the participants are now beginning to select books on their own. All 12 respondents indicated verbally that their children have demonstrated a more positive attitude toward reading by asking to be read to and listened to when reading. Also, it was indicated by all of the parents that their children have begun to select their own books. However, three respondents also indicated that they had not visited their child's school since the initial survey. This resulted in the practicum writer announcing plans to organize a follow-up meeting for all parents of the practicum participants.

## Conclusions

Individualized instruction is viewed as a positive technique which is used most often to assist learners in developing and strengthening their areas of weakness. It is this technique that the practicum writer would highly recommend, but the writer recognizes some drawbacks due to the size and scope of many programs. This format could also be viewed as being too costly since it could only impact a small portion of the population in need of help.

Reading Recovery is an excellent program that has a track record of being successful. In the recent years many districts have begun to seek more information regarding this individualized reading program. Even the district which the writer is affiliated with has begun to seek and sort out more information regarding this program. Also, many key district personnel in Chapter I visited the Reading Recovery Program at Ohio State University to see if it would meet the needs of its clientele. Presently, it is still being considered, but the largest drawback is the cost.

Special programs that receive a large funding base from the federal government such as Chapter I might be able to afford such a format. However, one would have to decide if it's important to serve several thousands and make short term gains or only 1,000 and make long term gains.

The practicum writer views this practicum as being an overall success because it was able to accomplish its goals and objectives. On the other hand, the writer recognizes that it only touched the surface and much more is needed in order to fully achieve long term success in the quest of producing independent readers. However, it also made the writer more knowledgeable of the problems which schools are faced with when attempting to meet the varying needs of all

students. It forced the writer to acknowledge that not enough is being done to solve this dilemma of providing the right type of service to meet the needs of all students.

One area which the writer views as essential is the use of more informal assessments in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students prior to intervention. If each instructor took the time to implement such a format he would be able to design a program around the needs of the students instead of those designed by the curriculum, causing learning to be viewed as a productive process.

In closing, the writer echoes the words of Pinnell (1990) who stated, "...teachers need to develop a complex set of understandings and a flexible repertoire of moves and counter moves" (p. 20). As educators, we must not set our sail in any one direction and expect it to be permanent. Instead, we must continue to try numerous directions in order to meet the changing needs of all learners especially those who fall in the category of being low achievers.

## Recommendations

This practicum writer has four recommendations based on the results of this practicum. First, collaborative efforts should be established amongst the various programs to coordinate the scheduling needs of special programs. Secondly, parents must be requested to read daily with and to their child. Thirdly, an after school program should be planned to allow all interested students to participate without missing other subjects. Finally, diagnostic assessments should be incorporated into the regular reading program.

## Dissemination

Plans for dissemination and networking include sharing the results of this practicum with the Chapter I project administrator, program consultants, district resource teachers, and the parenting outreach team. Further plans include sharing a brief overview of the practicum results with the project evaluator and the practicum participants' parents.

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# APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DISTRICT'S INFORMAL READING INVENTORY

# APPENDIX A

District's Informal Reading Inventory

The inventory is administered individually. It takes 15-20 minutes to administer. The purpose of the IRI is to diagnose the pupils' reading strengths and weaknesses and to establish the reading level.

The basal inventory consists of graded word lists, reading passages and comprehension questions on various levels. The levels extend from A (Readiness) through F (Fifth Grade) matching the district's basal selection.

APPENDIX B

RUNNING RECORD

## APPENDIX B

### Running Record

A running record is a reliable instrument used to record the reading behavior of students while tracking their reading strengths and weaknesses from an appropriate passage or text. It can be completed daily.

APPENDIX C

READY TO READ SERIES

## APPENDIX C

### Ready to Read Series (1985)

The Ready to Read Series (1985) was developed in New Zealand. If offers a variety of books which help children establish or confirm sound basic attitudes and understanding about reading. The series is divided into three board stages of reading development: emergent, early and fluency. There are 36 single titles and graded into level of difficulty with each stage.

APPENDIX D

WORD LIST PRE/POSTTEST

## APPENDIX D

### Word List Pre/Posttest

NAME: _____

SCORE: _____

Incorrect responses are recorded beside the word.

we

she

he

you

on

and

the

to

is

in

will

a

go

I

it

COMMENT:

APPENDIX E

LETTER IDENTIFICATION PRE/POSTTEST

## APPENDIX E

### Letter Identification (Clay, 1985) Pre/Posttest

This test takes five to ten minutes to administer. The upper and lower case letters are tested. The purpose of this test is to identify the participant's ability to identify and to distinguish among the alphabets by using either the name, sound or a word.

APPENDIX F

CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT PRE/POSTTEST

APPENDIX F

Concepts About Print (Clay, 1985) Pre/Posttest

This test is used for the purpose of identifying the participant's knowledge regarding the concepts about print. Some examples of the concepts are: What is a letter? Show me the front of the book. What is a word? The purpose of punctuation marks and the identification of capital and lower case letters.

The test is entitled, Sand or Stones. It takes five to ten minutes to administer. The examiner asks the participant to point to the features as she reads the text of the story.

APPENDIX G

WRITING VOCABULARY PRE/POSTTEST

APPENDIX G

Writing Vocabulary (Clay, 1985) Pre/Posttest

Name: _____

Date: _____ Score: _____

Directions: Write down all the words that you know.

APPENDIX H

DICTATION PRE/POSTTEST

## APPENDIX H

Dictation Test (Robinson and Watson, Cited in Clay, 1985) Pre/Posttest

The purpose of this test is to identify the participant's ability to analyze and to record the letter sounds he hears. Five simple sentences are provided. The examiner is requested to read a different passage each time the test is given.

# APPENDIX I

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY SURVEY

APPENDIX I

Instructional Strategy Survey

Position: _____

On the average, how many times per week do you use the following instructional strategies.

1. Brainstorming _____
2. Chanting ____
3. Questioning Techniques (critical thinking) _____
4. Language Awareness (vocabulary, language structure) _____
5. Predicting Strategies ___
6. Thinking Aloud Strategies _____
7. Directional Movement ___
8. Sequencing _
9. Reading Conferences __
10. Locating Responses ___
11. Cloze (oral, written) _____
12. Writing Conferences ____
13. Semantic Mapping _____
14. Graphic Organizers _____
15. Cross-Checking _____
16. Oral Reading _____
17. Shared Reading _____
18. One-to-one Word Matching_____
19. Sound-symbol Relationship_____
20. Confirm/Correct _____

APPENDIX J

PARENT SURVEY

APPENDIX J

Parent Survey

1. How much time do you spend with your child doing his school work weekly.

   _____a) 20-30 minutes

   _____b) 1-2 hours

   _____c) 3-5 hours

   _____d) 6 hours or more

2. Did you feel that the homework assignments were:

   _____too easy for my child; he already knew the work

   _____too hard

   _____just right, my child could do the work alone

   _____not enough to maintain his interest

3. How often do you read with and to your child?

   _____never

   _____1-3 days a week

   _____4-7 days a week

4. Does your child enjoy school?

   _____Yes ____No

5. Do you feel that your child has a positive attitude toward reading?

   _____Yes ____No

6. Does your child select books to read on his own?

   _____never

   _____sometimes

   _____always

7. Did you have a teacher conference this year with your child's teacher

   _____Yes ____No

8. How often did you visit your child's school this year?

_____a) once

_____b) twice

_____c) never

9. Would your child benefit from an additional support program to strengthen his reading ability?

_____Yes ____No _____Maybe